

THE NETWORKER

a publication of matrix parent network & resource center • spring 2014

Matrix Parent Network

is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1983 to serve families of children with special needs. We serve Marin, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma counties.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Early Intervention

“The early bird catches the worm”



While a meal of worms doesn't sound appealing at all, acting on something early can be beneficial. As parents, when that little voice inside is saying “something is not quite right here”, probably the first thing we do is dismiss it, we are overreacting. We may have heard from learned professionals that everything is fine, to trust that time will take care of our possibly exaggerated concerns.

Tick, tick, tick...that is the sound of the clocks of our children's lives as time passes while possible learning and development opportunities are lost. Being patient and waiting until concerns are “bad enough” or your child is “delayed enough” to qualify for treatment is one strategy. But most families instinctively know that the sooner treatment or services start, the better the outcomes.

Inside this edition of the Networker, we have some great information on intervening early for your child. Since children generally come equipped with parents, what does intervening early mean for you, as the parent? How can you benefit from doing things sooner rather than later?

What shall you, as a lone parent, do to get things in place to assist your child? It often feels like pushing an enormous rock uphill when you are doing it all by yourself, while you are trying to put things in place such as getting assessments done, navigating complex systems to find out about eligibility and getting services started.

First, take a deep breath. Monitoring your stress levels as you get organized and carry out your advocacy efforts are very important. Next, understand how important it is to keep good lines of communication open with professionals as you work towards getting those critical services for your child. Do your research and be prepared.

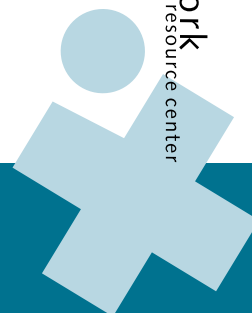
Finally, know that you do not have to tackle this task alone. You can call Matrix to talk through the situation, learn your rights, help you get organized and create an action plan. By doing these steps you improve your chances of getting things in place sooner for your child... which is much more rewarding than some icky worms!

Nora Thompson
Executive Director

parent network
+ resource center



Intervene Early



Intervene Early

Early attention to a situation can have an impact. When parenting children with special needs, sometimes it is hard to sort out areas that benefit with early intervention from areas that fall into the category of “it is what it is”. In his book, *Far From the Tree*, Andrew Solomon grapples with this thorny question: when am I honoring the core of who my child is and when am I intervening to improve a skill deficit? There may not be an easy answer.

Why intervene early? It can prevent a challenge from escalating. It might also minimize patterns from deeply forming requiring more intense and lengthy intervention later. In some areas of development, intervening when the brain is in a key stage of development is critical.

Early intervention for little ones under three years of age and intervening early about a problem that appears later in our child’s life is part of our journey of special needs parenting. Research supports intervening early. We begin interventions with hopes and dreams that are so important to our journey. Along with hopes and dreams comes accepting we can’t control outcomes. Much of our journey is finding balance and keeping perspective.

Three Important “A’s”:

- Awareness: of our children’s traits, skills and overall profile
- Acceptance: what we can and can’t control
- Action: doing our best to balance remediation and supporting strengths

Intervening early applies to areas such as:

- Reading: Intervening before third grade
- Behavior including risky behavior such as “experimenting” with substances
- Language skills
- Social skills
- Physical skills
- Building independence

- Parenting: adjusting our ways that may not be most supportive

Beware when you hear:

- She’ll grow out of it.
- Let’s wait and see.
- He is very young for his age.

Waiting to see if your child will grow out of “it” is risky. If growing out of it doesn’t happen, the optimal window to intervene early may have passed. An evaluation of areas of concern and any suspected disability will give you more information.

For little ones under age three:

- Use developmental milestone charts.
- Learn about the California Regional Center assessment process.
- Consult with Pediatricians and others who know development.

For children over age of three:

- Read grade level standards to compare your child’s skills.
- Ask others to benchmark typical from atypical behaviors and skills.
- Explore interventions, either in special or general education.
- Learn about special education or other evaluations.

Intervening early was important for those of us whose children are now young adults. It was only a part of a host of other factors making up the unique person each of our children is and will become.

Love your child right where he or she is. Accept yourself for where you are.

Visit www.matrixparents.org for more information or call us at 800.578.2592. We are here to help.



Perspectives From Our Matrix Staff:

- Do the best you can with what you have and find some peace with that.
- There rarely is a magic bullet.
- Maintain humility: many factors control outcomes.
- Balance interventions with joyful activities with your child.
- Be flexible – sometimes who our children are meant to be is not what we may have had in mind.
- Practice self care – take care of yourself.
- Focus on strengths.



The Early Edition

a publication of matrix parent network & resource center • spring 2014

The Early Edition is a publication of the Matrix Family Resource Center (FRC) program — part of California's interagency system of early intervention services for children, birth to 36 months. Our FRC staff is here to provide information and support to help you care for your baby. Additional information and resources are also provided in a designated **Birth to 3** section on our website at www.matrixparents.org

Play For Fun

You have gone through the special needs toy catalogue for the umpteenth time. You've read about and gathered all the "low cost" or "free" items or activities that you can use to help build skills. You've made your list of the best developmentally appropriate games and puzzles for the well-wishing relatives who've asked for gift ideas to help teach your child new skills.

You have every blowing, bubble, sipping and sucking contraption recommended by the speech therapist to improve your child's oral motor skills. You have the bouncy seat ball, the balance board and the trampoline to work on your child's gross motor skills. You've collected a variety of "your first sewing kits" and small blocks and cups to help your child practice the all important pincher grasp and fist grip for fine motor development.

You now look at the pile of stuff. The pile comes with the best of intentions. You tell yourself you are going to use all these developmental aids every day with your child. And you'll do this on top of the daily 15 minutes of speech drills, 10 minutes of gross and fine motor exercises (each) and 20 minutes of "playing" with your child to help develop essential cognitive skills.

And none of this feels like "play" to you. You wonder how it feels for your child. You do try to let go and spontaneously engage with your child for the pure fun of it. And when you do, when you play for



fun and not purpose, it is fun – but then you feel guilty. Guilty that you haven't used the precious time you've carved out to practice, practice, practice all the exercises all the therapists have instructed you to do with the well-meaning comment, "it'll only take 10 minutes."

So what's an overwhelmed parent of a little one with special needs to do? Simply put, you do the best you can.

You listen to your gut and you learn to balance play for fun with play for learning. You acknowledge to yourself and the early intervention specialists that sometimes fun for fun's sake is as important for your child (and you) than all the recommended exercises combined.

Remember that the bond you develop with your little one will last a lifetime. Let play for pure fun be a part of that. You won't be sorry.



Jugar por Diversión

Usted ha pasado a través del catálogo de juguetes para necesidades especiales por enésima vez. Usted ha leído sobre esto y ha juntado todas las cosas o actividades “gratuitas” o de “bajo costo” que se pueden utilizar para ayudar a construir las habilidades. Usted ha creado una lista con los mejores juegos y rompecabezas más apropiados para el desarrollo, para sus bien intencionados parientes que le han pedido ideas de regalos para ayudar a enseñar a su niño nuevas habilidades.

Usted tiene todos los aparatos para soplar, bombear, succionar y chupar que le ha recomendada el terapeuta del habla para mejorar las habilidades motoras orales de su hijo. Usted tiene el asiento pelota, la tabla de equilibrio y el trampolín para trabajar en las habilidades motrices básicas de su hijo. Ha reunido una variedad de “sus primeros kits de costura” y pequeños bloques y tazas para ayudar a su hijo a practicar los muy importantes agarre de pinza y agarre el puño para el desarrollo de la motricidad fina.

Ahora usted mira al montón de cosas que tiene. La pila de cosas viene con la mejor de las intenciones. Se dice a usted mismo que va a usar todas estas ayudas para el desarrollo todos los días con su hijo. Y que va a hacer esto encima de los 15 minutos diarios de de ejercicios para el desarrollo del lenguaje, de los 10 minutos de ejercicios para la motricidad gruesa y fina (cada uno) y los 20 minutos para “jugar” con su hijo para ayudarlo a desarrollar las habilidades cognitivas esenciales.



Y nada de esto se siente como “jugar” para usted. Se pregunta cómo se sentirá su hijo. No intenta relajarse y espontáneamente involucrarse con su hijo por la pura diversión de ello. Y cuando lo hace, cuando se juega por diversión y no por el objetivo, es divertido - pero luego se siente culpable. Culpable de que usted no ha utilizado el valioso tiempo que ha labrado para practicar, practicar, y

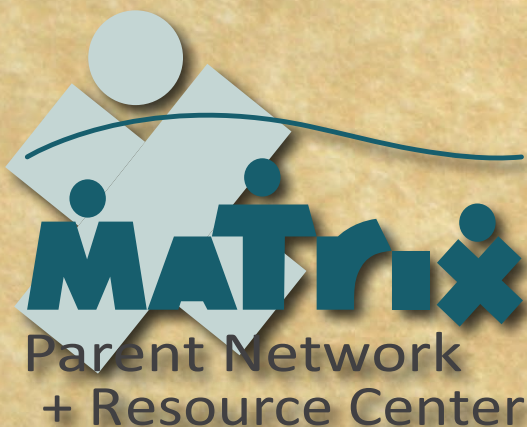
practicar todos los ejercicios que todos los terapeutas le han instruido a llevar a cabo, con el comentario bien intencionado de que “sólo tomará 10 minutos.” Entonces, ¿qué es lo que hace un padre agobiado de un pequeño con necesidades especiales?

En pocas palabras, usted hace lo mejor que puede hacer. Escucha a su instinto y aprende a equilibrar el juego para la diversión con el juego para el aprendizaje.

Usted reconoce a sí mismo y a los especialistas de intervención temprana, que a veces la diversión por el amor a la diversión es tan importante para su hijo (y usted) como lo son todos los ejercicios recomendados juntos. Recuerde que la unión que usted desarrolle con su pequeño va a durar toda la vida.



Annual Report 2012–2013



This past year was such a celebration of the past 30 years! We were able to look through old photos, reconnect with old and cherished friends, pop some fine champagne at our first Gala in years and reflect on what changes we have seen over these past three decades. If our founders had a crystal ball and could have looked 30 years into the future, they would be astonished at how technology has made things easier (in some ways) for families, how research and science has made identification and diagnosis more precise, how new treatments and understanding early intervention has promoted more positive outcomes for children with special needs. All of these things would reinforce the founding moms' commitment to get Matrix started.

I do think they would be less pleased with our current reality that it has become more challenging for some families to access services and that there is still a need to get the message out that special education is not a place but a set of services designed to meet the unique needs of a child. They would probably be dismayed to see that budgets and finances have significantly impacted resources and services. Perhaps that is why we don't have crystal balls, so as to not discourage important dreams.

Social media has continued to bloom, with thousands accessing our information-packed website, hundreds following us on Facebook and a strong and growing Yahoo Support Group. Attendance at trainings and workshops has grown exponentially; families and professionals continue to seek the high quality information presented. Our new endeavor, "Coffee, Conversation, and Companionship", a topic-specific support group hybrid has proven to be quite popular.

After 30 years, the families in the North Bay area still need support, information and training so they can become their child's best advocate. We are so pleased to be able to continue a fine tradition.

Nora Thompson
Executive Director

The Year in Review

Highlights of Programs and Services

- Helpline services provided, giving general information and support, resources, and referrals: **848**
- Contacts with families requiring more intensive services — in-depth consultation, paperwork review, or planning for IEP meetings: **2031**
- Parent attendance at support groups: **208**
- Parent attendance at trainings and presentations: **473**
- Professional attendance at trainings and presentations: **255**
- Information packets distributed: **3118**
- Posts made to our online parent support group: **625**

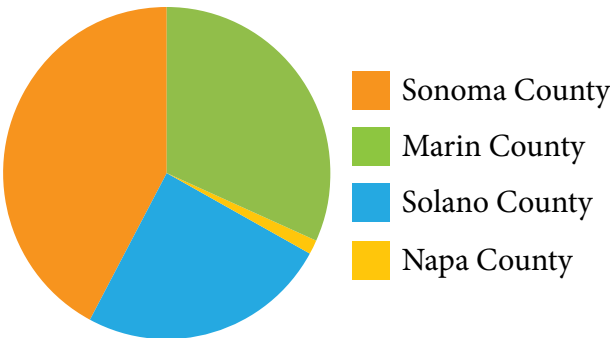
Notable

We presented 12 trainings to professional audiences throughout the North Bay in the past fiscal year. Examples of audiences include participants from:

- CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) Marin
- Solano Children's Services
- Marin Dependency Court
- Huckleberry Youth Services
- Golden Gate Regional Center
- Sonoma Court Services

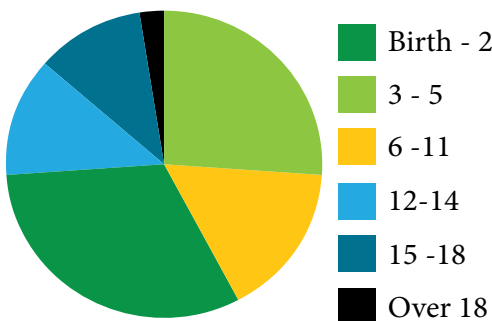
WHO WE SERVED

By County



WHO WE SERVED

By child's age



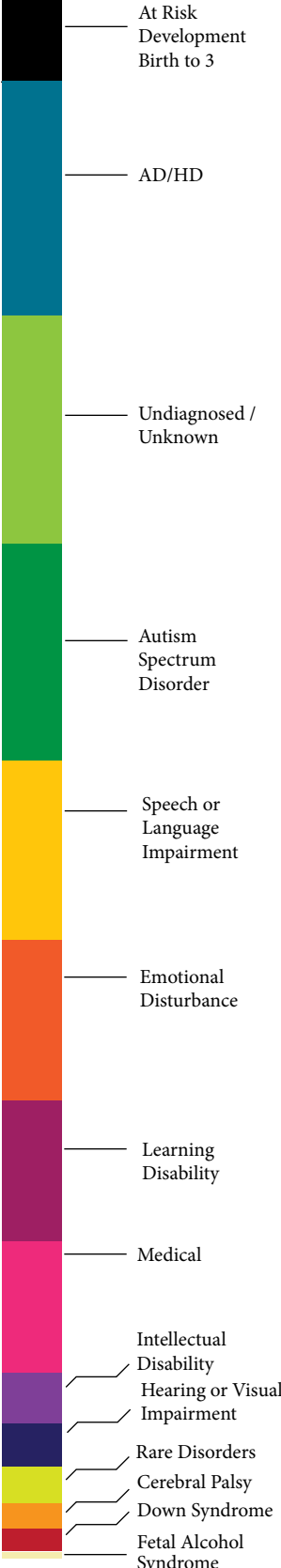
Individual Parents Served
1552



Individual and Group Services Provided to Families
4542

WHO WE SERVED

By disability category, as reported by families



Thanks to Our Contributors July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

\$10,000+

BioMarin Pharmaceutical
John Kilburn Fund of the Marin
Community Foundation
The Schow Foundation

\$5,000 – \$9,999

Marin Community Foundation
Tammy and Kurt Mobley
Speedway Children's Charities
Bart and Melissa Welles

\$2,500 – \$4,999

Freitas Foundation
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Consultation
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Solvatech
The Spa at Applewood Inn
Target
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Volunteers

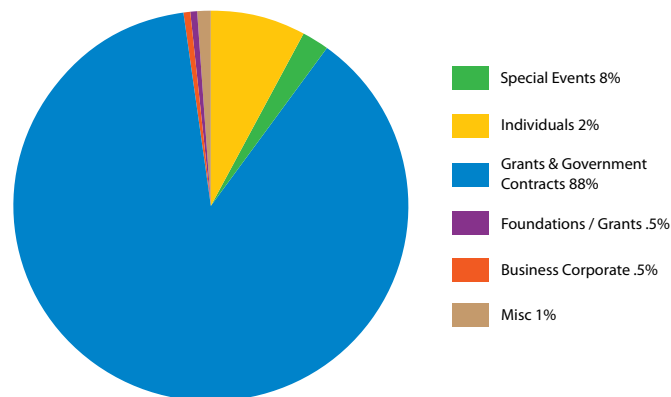
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The Taub Family
Joe Thompson
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July 2012 – June 2013 Financial Statistics

INCOME

Individuals	\$81,687
Foundations /Grants	\$4,800
Businesses	\$6,314
Special Events	\$21,688
Fees / Misc.	\$8,430
Government /Contracts	\$882,600
Total Income:	\$1,005,519

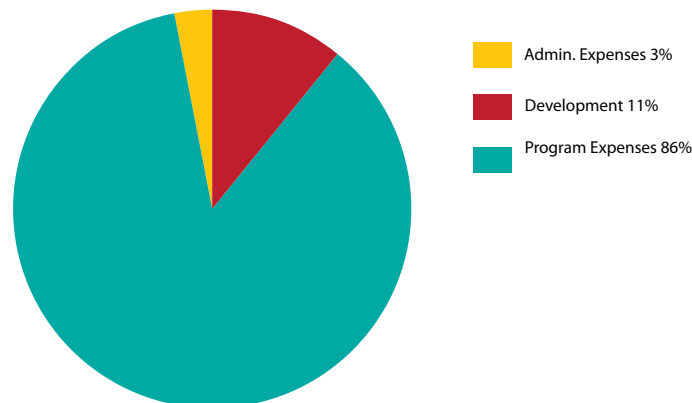
INCOME SOURCES



EXPENSES

Program Expenses	\$872,270
Admin. Expenses	\$28,418
Development	\$108,858
Total:	\$1,009,546

EXPENSES



Breakdown of Supporting Expenses

Payroll	\$715,162
Rent	\$69,683
Operating Expenses	\$188,107
Ins., Audit, Misc.	\$19,966
Special Event Expenses	\$16,628

Total Expense: \$1,009,546

Full Time Employee's = 14.5 # of Employees = 21

Complete audited financial statements for fiscal year 2012–2013 are available in our Novato office.

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Fax: 415.884.3555

1615 W. Texas Street, Ste. 4
Fairfield, CA 94533
Helpline: 800.578.2592
Fax: 707.425.4585



Many thanks to all of our supporters and families. We work very hard to maximize all of our resources at Matrix, and we appreciate your continued financial support. It is so easy — click on the **Donate Now** button on our website, or send a check to our office in Novato. In this economy, families need our help now more than ever.

www.matrixparents.org

Empowering families of children with special needs

Intervenir Temprano

En casi todo, la atención temprana a una situación puede tener un impacto. Cuando se esta criando niños con necesidades especiales, a veces es difícil separar las áreas que podrían beneficiarse de la intervención temprana de las áreas que pueden caer en la categoría de “es lo que es.”

En su libro, *Lejos del Árbol*, Andrew Solomon se enfrenta con esta espinosa pregunta: ¿cuando estoy honrando el núcleo de quien mi hijo realmente es y cuándo estoy interviniendo en nombre del déficit de una habilidad que podría mejorar? Esta es una pregunta difícil. Puede que no haya una respuesta fácil. ¿Por qué intervenir a tiempo? Puede prevenir que una dificultad escale. Intervenir temprano también puede minimizar que algunos hábitos y patrones se formen profundamente requiriendo luego una intervención más intensa y prolongada.

En algunas áreas del desarrollo intervenir cuando el cerebro está en una etapa clave del desarrollo es un momento crítico. La intervención temprana para los pequeños menores de tres años de edad e intervenir tempranamente con un problema que aparece más tarde en la vida de nuestro hijo es parte de nuestro viaje para apoyar a nuestros niños. La intervención temprana tiene como objetivo mejorar los resultados. Hay mucha investigación que apoya esto.

Comenzamos intervenciones con esperanzas y sueños ya que éstos son fundamentales en el camino de la crianza de los hijos con necesidades especiales. Con nuestras esperanzas y sueños también viene el aceptar que no podemos controlar los resultados que nuestros niños tendrán. Hay muchos factores que determinan sus vidas. Gran parte de nuestro viaje es encontrar el equilibrio y mantener la perspectiva.

Las 3 “Reglas” que pueden ayudar:

- **Concientización:** de rasgos y habilidades y la comprensión del perfil de nuestros hijos / reposición/ composición / neurología (escoger uno)
- **Aceptación:** de los rasgos y habilidades ... luchando contra la negación y duda

- **Acción:** hacer lo mejor que pueda, el equilibrio de la remediación y el apoyo a las fortalezas.

Intervenir temprano puede aplicar a muchas áreas:

- **Lectura:** la investigación es clara sobre los estudiantes a los que se les dificulta la lectura en tercer grado, continuaran teniendo dificultades en la lectura. ... la intervención en K- 3 es clave.
- **Comportamiento** incluyendo los comportamientos de riesgo tales como “experimentar” con sustancias
- **Habilidades del lenguaje**
- **Habilidades sociales**
- **Desarrollar independencia**
- **Crianza:** ajustar los patrones de crianza de los hijos que puedan ser más de menos apoyo

Una evaluación completa de cualquier área en la que se sospecha que hay una discapacidad, o en un área de preocupación le dará más conocimiento de la situación.

Tenga cuidado cuando escuchas:

- Va a crecer fuera de él
- Vamos a esperar y vemos
- Es joven para su edad
- Confíe en sus instintos y solicite una evaluación. Esperar ver si su hijo va a crecer fuera de él puede ser riesgoso. Si no crecen fuera de él, la ventana óptima para intervenir a tiempo puede haber pasado.

Para los pequeños menores de 3 años

- Utilice las listas de las etapas del desarrollo ... (información que puede encontrar en nuestro sitio web)
- Comuníquese con los Centros Regionales de California, ya que pueden evaluar el desarrollo del niño para determinar la necesidad de intervención.
- Consulte con los pediatras y otros que tienen una perspectiva sobre las etapas del desarrollo

Para niños mayores de 3 años:

- Lea los estándares académicos del grado de su hijo para compararlos con sus habilidades
- Hable con otros padres de su confianza para obtener una referencia típica de comportamientos atípicos
- Si su hijo no está en educación especial, consulte con el maestro de su hijo acerca de las intervenciones adicionales que le pueden ofrecer en la educación general
- Mientras que la educación especial requiere que cualquier área de preocupación relacionada a la discapacidad sea tal que requiera instrucción especializada, si cree que este pueda ser el caso, solicite una evaluación (información Matrix Assessment Packet).

Mirando hacia atrás, la intervención temprana es importante para aquellos de nosotros cuyos hijos ahora son adultos jóvenes. Era sólo una parte de una serie de otros factores que componen la persona única de cada uno de nuestros hijos es y sigue convirtiendo.

Ame a su hijo justo donde él o ella es. Acepte a ti mismo por dónde se encuentre. Visita www.matrixparents.org para más información o llame al 415.884.3535.

Perspectivas de otros más avanzados en el camino:

- Haz lo mejor que puedas con lo que tienes - acepte que usted sólo hace lo que puede hacer
- Pocas veces existe una varita mágica
- Muchos factores están trabajando en todas nuestras circunstancias que afectan a los resultados

Matrix News

Volunteering is
a work of heart



Interview with Matrix Volunteer Elizabeth Ganz

by Tony Adessa,
Matrix Development Director

TA: When did you first learn about Matrix, and what attracted you to volunteering for the organization?

EG: During the period of 2000 – 2009 when I was a Resource Specialist at Lu Sutton Elementary School in Novato, parents of children with special needs would come to their IEP meetings. Once I retired in 2009, I came to visit Matrix and learned more about its programs.

TA: What volunteer work do you do?

EG: Interested parents make an appointment and I meet with them on a one-to-one basis. Parents bring all of their accumulated special education paperwork into the library where we review the papers together and I help clarify and interpret them. Much of it can be shredded or recycled.

People often have multiple copies. We organize the important and current paperwork into a binder. Matrix also has many hand-outs that people appreciate.

TA: What did you learn from this volunteer work?

EG: I learned that even simple things can be very helpful; people are so appreciative. In retirement, I want to be useful and give back.

TA: Did your volunteer experience meet your needs and expectations?

EG: Yes it has. In fact, I wouldn't mind doing more.

TA: What are your goals and dreams for Matrix's future?

EG: Just keep doing what you have been doing. Your website is impressive. I hope Matrix can become more well-known in the schools, and that they realize we're not adversaries.

TA: Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?

EG: If you are interested in organizing your IEP paperwork, please call Gloria Ochoa at 415.884.3535 or email her at glorioa@matrixparents.org to set up an appointment.

If you would like to volunteer at Matrix, please call 415.475.2111

New Faces at Matrix



Johanna Kecskes
Parent Advisor

"After my second child was born with a vision impairment, I became very interested in Special Education law and learned all I could to make sure my son was

receiving the help he needed at school. When I learned about Matrix, I attended some trainings and found the information Matrix provided very helpful. I decided I wanted to help others the way Matrix helped me and became a parent advisor."



Kristie Anderson
Parent Advisor/
Media Coordinator

"I am the mother of two young children with special needs. As soon as I realized something was going on with my son at 18 months

of age, I started advocating for him and never stopped. I entered a whole new world and managed to navigate my way through this new world while maintaining a sense of mutual respect and collaboration with doctors, therapists, teachers, and many other professionals. Some of the most valuable work I have had the opportunity to do is reaching out in the parent community to share my experience, helping others navigate through this world of special needs that can be so overwhelming and intimidating at times.

TA Update

Matrix is pleased to announce that our funding has been renewed by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, as the Region 6 Parent Technical Assistance Center to continue providing technical assistance to federally funded parent centers in the western states and Pacific region for the next five years. This project allows us to work closely with the parent centers in our region, but also connects us with all of the Parent Training and Information Centers, Community Parent Resource Centers and the other six Parent Technical Assistance Centers across the country and the newly funded Center for Parent Information and Resources.

Development

Matrix 3rd Annual Golf Tournament

Despite pervasive ominous skies, periodic downpours, and less than optimal warmth, all who played in Matrix's 3rd Annual Golf Tournament survived the elements and had a great time. Held April 25th at the Windsor Golf Club, some 72 golfers drove, putted, and wedged their way through the rain-soaked course without batting an eye. All proceeds will be directly allocated to Matrix.

Matrix extends its heartfelt thanks to its wonderful sponsors: Flagship Sponsors: Jerry Thompson & Sons Painting, Inc., BioMarin; Dinner Sponsors: First Community Bank; Lunch Sponsors: Andy's Produce Market, The Swain Center; Cart Sponsors: Ajaib Bhadare on behalf of First Community Bank; Beverage Sponsors: The Central Office, Parmeter General Engineers & Services, Inc.; Single Hole Sponsors: Cowtown Creations, George Petersen Insurance Agency, Ongaro & Sons, Rotork Controls, Inc., SolarCraft, Sutter Pacific Medical Center, Valerie R. Humphries Trust/Wonder Soil, West Bay Builders.

A rock-star team of volunteers dispatched their duties with aplomb, facilitating a fun-filled event that ran smoothly in the face of daunting conditions. Special praise is due to Laura Lee McConnell, Tania Gibbons, Demian Reddy, Tyler Dodd, Marissa Mehr, Erica Torgerson, Nancy Weaver, Bill Allen, Rebecca Sudtell, Scott Vogelsang, Lindsey Franz, Tahni Van Perre, Rhanda Dunn, Sarah Ponsford, Nora Thompson, Norm Bryan, Tony Darren, Kristie Anderson, Brenda Ficco, Hannah Hughes, Kate Kelly, Jess Osier, Demian Reddy, Brenda Ficco, and Tony Adessa.

Photographer Brenda Ficco captured all the day's color and excitement. In addition to these fantastic photos, please go to Matrix's Flickr at www.matrixparents.org to view the entire set of golf tournament pictures.

Matrix 3rd Annual Golf Tournament



A Day In The Park!

Matrix volunteer Jessica Johnson will mount a special event entitled "A Day in the Park!", Saturday, May 31st, from 10:00a.m. – 2:00p.m., in Vacaville's Alamo Creek Park. Presented by Matrix, this free event is open to the public. Plan to come and enjoy entertainment from Danc-Sing Stars

Studio, music and games, face painting, and other fun activities for the whole family. Tony Adessa, Matrix Development Director, will be present to greet attendees, make a short presentation, and staff a display table with literature about Matrix and its programs.

parent network
+ resource center



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www.matrixparents.org



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IS MY STUDENT WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AT RISK FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

HELP! Sheet en español

HELP! Sheet in English

COMING SOON!

IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan) Packet



Networker • Intervene Issue Spring 2014

Our mission: To empower families of children with special needs to successfully understand and access the systems that serve them.

Nuestra misión: Capacitar a las familias de niños con necesidades especiales para entender y acceder a los sistemas que los sirven.

HELP US GO DIGITAL

To receive the Networker and Express by email,
sign up at www.matrixparents.org

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